



APPLICANT WRITING SAMPLE 1

ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH ANALYST 1

Source: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/monitoring/reports/2013-14sigmonitoringplan.pdf>

I. INTRODUCTION

Monitoring the implementation of Federal programs and the use of Federal program funds is an essential function of the U. S. Department of Education (ED). This document, designed for the 2013-2014 school year, describes the purpose, rationale, and process used by the Office of School Turnaround (OST) in monitoring the use of Title I, section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds by State Educational Agencies (SEAs) which are interchangeably referred to as “SEAs” or “States” throughout this document. As in previous years, the monitoring plan will be reviewed and revised periodically to reflect lessons learned and programmatic clarification.

School Improvement Grants (SIG) authorized under section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, provides grants to SEAs that States use to make competitive sub-grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate the greatest need and the strongest commitment to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools. Turning around persistently low achieving schools is a major ED priority.

The SIG program provides unprecedented resources for turning around our nation’s persistently low achieving schools emphasizing changes in school governance, structure, human capital and teaching practices. For 2009, \$3.5 billion was appropriated or available to States for SIG; \$545 million was provided for FY 2010; \$535 million for FY 2011; and \$534 million for FY 2012.

Under the final requirements published in the *Federal Register* in October 2010, SIG funds are to be focused on each State’s “Tier I,” “Tier II,” and “Tier III” schools. Tier I schools are the lowest-achieving five percent of a State’s Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring; Title I secondary schools in improvement, corrective, or restructuring with graduation rates below 60 percent over a number of years; and if a State so chooses certain Title I eligible (and participating) elementary schools that are as low achieving as the State’s other Tier I schools (“newly eligible” Tier I schools).

Tier II schools are the lowest-achieving five percent of a State’s secondary schools that are eligible for but do not receive, Title I, Part A funds; secondary schools that are eligible for but do not receive, Title I, Part A funds with graduation rates below 60 percent over a number of years; and if a State so chooses, certain additional Title I eligible (participating and non-participating) secondary schools that are as low- achieving as the State’s other Tier II schools (“newly eligible” Tier II schools).

Tier III schools are Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not identified as Tier I or Tier II schools and if a State so chooses, certain additional Title I eligible (participating and non-participating) schools (“newly eligible” Tier III schools).

In any Tier I and Tier II schools an LEA chooses to serve using SIG funds, the LEA must implement one of the four school intervention models: turnaround, restart, school closure, or transformation models. However, Tier III schools are not required to implement one of four school intervention models.

A. Definition and Purpose of Monitoring

Monitoring is the regular and systematic examination of a State's administration and implementation of a Federal education grant, contract, or cooperative agreement administered by ED. Monitoring the use of Federal funds has long been an essential function of ED. ED monitors programs under the general administrative authority of the U. S. Department of Education Organization Act. Section 80.40(e) of Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) also permits ED to make site visits as warranted by program needs.

Monitoring of SIG programs by OST is necessary to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Monitoring assesses the extent to which States provide leadership and guidance for LEAs and schools in implementing policies and procedures that comply with the statutes and regulations of Title I, section 1003(g). ED through the OST intends to identify areas where additional technical assistance may be needed by and can be provided to the SEA and LEAs.

Monitoring formalizes the integral relationship between ED and the States and emphasizes, first and foremost, accountability for using resources wisely in educating and preparing our nation's students. As a result of monitoring, ED is able to gather data about State and local needs and use that data to design technical assistance initiatives and national leadership activities. Thus, monitoring serves not only as a means for helping States achieve high-quality implementation of SIG, it also helps ED to be a better advisor and partner with States in that effort. OST's monitoring activities are designed to focus on the results of States' efforts to implement the final requirements of the School Improvement Grants under Title I section 1003(g) of the ESEA using available resources and the flexibility provisions available to States and LEAs. Data from State monitoring also informs the programs' performance indicators under the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA).

ED policy requires every program office overseeing discretionary or formula grant programs to prepare a monitoring plan for each of its programs. The monitoring process will include risk-based analysis and target areas of identified need, coordinated with technical assistance.

II. MONITORING INDICATORS

The content of monitoring is based on States' responsibilities to provide guidance and support to LEAs and schools based on the requirements of the ESEA. Monitoring States' implementation of programs administered by OST means closely examining State policies, systems, and procedures to ensure LEA and school compliance with statutes and regulations.

ED uses monitoring indicators to determine the fidelity and quality of implementation of Federal programs and activities administered by SEAs. The use of such criteria ensures a consistent application of these standards across monitoring teams and across States. Monitoring SIG programs has expanded our focus on the work States, school districts and schools are undertaking to turn around the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools. SIG monitoring reviews provide an opportunity to observe the intent and purpose of school improvement and school reform efforts. The published indicators provide guidance for all States regarding the purpose and intended outcomes of monitoring by describing what is being monitored and providing the criteria for assessing the quality of implementation (acceptable evidence). The SIG monitoring procedures and protocols (for on-site monitoring as well as desk monitoring) will concentrate on the following indicator areas: application process, technical assistance, monitoring process, fiscal responsibilities, data collection, and implementation. Please note that the indicators are written broadly to cover all the requirements of each topic. Examples of documentation and evidence that States and LEAs can provide to show compliance with these regulations are also listed for each indicator.